AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claim 1 (previously amended): A system, comprising:

a first logic unit to provide a list of service providers via a communication connection, indicating a real-time availability and a rate of at least one service provider of the service providers;

a second logic unit to receive from a user a selection of a service provider from the list of service providers;

a third logic unit to attempt to establish a real-time communications connection to the selected service provider in response to the selection; and

a fourth logic unit to search a database for an alternate service provider, in response to a failed attempt to connect the selected service provider and the user, and to offer the user an option of connecting with the alternate service provider.

Claim 2 (cancelled)

Claim 3 (previously amended): The system of claim 1, wherein, in response to a connection established between the selected service provider and the user, the fourth logic unit presents the alternate service provider after communication is completed with the selected service provider.

Claim 4 (previously amended): The system of claim 1, wherein the selected service provider is an information provider.

Claim 5 (previously amended): The system of claim 4, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a recorded transmission.

Claim 6 (previously amended): The system of claim 4, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a communication with a live person.

Claim 7 (previously amended): The system of claim 1, wherein the selection is received over a telephone connection.

Claim 8 (previously amended): The system of claim 1, wherein the selection is received over the communication connection which includes an Internet connection.

Claims 9 - 12 (cancelled)

Claim 13 (previously amended): The system of claim 1, wherein a set of criteria to search the database for the alternative service provider is established by a system administrator of the system.

Claim 14 - 16 (cancelled)

Claim 17 (previously amended): A system for establishing a real-time communication connection between two parties, the system comprising:

a communications interface; and

a controller computer linked with the communications interface, the controller computer having:

a first logic unit to provide a list of service providers over an Internet connection, indicating a real-time availability and a rate of each service provider of the service providers;

a second logic unit to receive from a user a selection of a service provider from the list of service providers;

a third logic unit to attempt to establish a real-time communications connection to the selected service provider; and

a fourth logic unit to search a database of alternate service providers, in response to a failed attempt to connect the selected service provider and the user, for an alternate service provider based on a pre-established set of criteria and to offer the user an option of connecting with the alternate service provider, wherein the set of criteria comprises one or more of: a rate within a predetermined range of a rate of the selected service provider, subject matter, and a reliability factor indicating a ratio of successful attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users to total attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users.

Claim 18 (previously amended): The system of claim 17, wherein the third logic unit attempts to establish a real-time communications connection between the user and the alternate service provider.

Claim 19 (previously amended): The system of claim 17, wherein the real-time communications connection is a telephone connection.

Claim 20 (previously amended): The system of claim 17, wherein the real-time communications connection is the Internet connection.

Claim 21 (original): The system of claim 17, wherein the first logic unit provides the list of providers to the user via a web page.

Claim 22 (previously amended): The system of claim 17, wherein the second logic unit receives the user's selection via a web page.

Claim 23 (previously amended): The system of claim 17, wherein the third logic unit provides a list of the alternate service providers to the user via a web page.

Claim 24 (previously amended): The system of claim 17, wherein the selected service provider is an information provider.

Claim 25 (previously amended): The system of claim 24, wherein the information provider's information is provided as a recorded transmission.

Claim 26 (previously amended): The system of claim 24, wherein the information provider's information is provided as a communication with a live person.

Claims 27 - 31 (cancelled)

Claim 32 (previously amended): The system of claim 17, wherein a system administrator can establish the set of criteria.

Claim 33 (original): The system of claim 17, wherein a user establishes the set of criteria.

Claim 34 (previously amended): The system of claim 17, wherein, in response to a connection established between the selected service provider and the user, the fourth logic unit presents the alternate service provider after communication is completed with the selected service provider.

Claims 35 - 36 (cancelled)

Claim 37 (previously amended): A method comprising:

sending a user a list of service providers via an Internet connection, indicating a real-time availability and a rate of each service provider on the list;

receiving from the user a selection of a service provider on the list;

attempting to establish real-time communications between the user and the selected service provider; and

offering the user an option to connect to an alternate service provider elected in advance by the selected service provider, including searching a database of alternate service providers, in response to a failed attempt to connect the selected service provider and the user, for an alternate service provider based on a pre-established set of criteria comprising one or more of: a rate within a predetermined range of a rate of the selected service provider, subject matter, and a reliability factor indicating a ratio of successful attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users to total attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users

Claims 38 - 39 (cancelled)

Claim 40 (previously amended): The method of claim 37, wherein the communications established between the selected service provider and the user is a telephone connection.

Claim 41 (previously amended): The method of claim 37, wherein the communications established between the selected service provider and the user is the Internet connection.

Claim 42 (cancelled)

Claim 43 (previously amended): The method of claim 37, in response to a connection established between the selected service provider and the user, providing the option to connect to

the alternate service provider after the communications ends between the user and the selected service provider .

Claim 44 (previously amended): The method of claim 37, wherein the selected service provider is an information provider.

Claim 45 (previously amended): The method of claim 44, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a recorded transmission.

Claim 46 (previously amended): The method of claim 44, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a communication with a live person.

Claims 47 - 48 (cancelled)

Claim 49 (previously amended): The method of claim 37, wherein the user can determine the range.

Claim 50 (previously amended): The method of claim 37, wherein a system administrator can determine the range.

Claims 51 - 52 (cancelled)

Claim 53 (previously amended): The method of claim 37, wherein a system administrator can establish the criteria by which a match is determined.

Claim 54 (previously amended): The method of claim 37, wherein the user can establish the criteria by which a match is determined.

Claims 55 - 56 (cancelled)

Claim 57 (currently amended): A method of rerouting a user from a selected service provider to an alternate service provider, the method comprising:

      providing access to a database of alternate service providers when a selected provider cannot be reached;

searching a database of alternate service providers, in response to a failed attempt to connect the selected service provider and the user, for an alternate service provider based on a pre-established set of criteria comprising one or more of: a rate within a predetermined range of a rate of the selected service provider, ~~subject matter,~~ and a reliability factor indicating a ratio of successful attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users to total attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users; and

providing a user with a list of alternate service providers .

Claim 58 (previously amended): The method of claim 57, wherein the selected service provider is an information provider.

Claim 59 (previously amended): The method of claim 58, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a recorded transmission.

Claim 60 (previously amended): The method of claim 58, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a communication with a live person.

Claim 61 (previously amended): The method of claim 57, wherein the user can select an alternate service provider from the list and be connected to the alternate service provider.

Claim 62 (original): The method of claim 57, wherein the selected service provider receives a pre-established percentage of any commission paid to the alternate service provider.

Claim 63 (previously amended): The method of claim 57, wherein the selected service provider is given an option to provide access to the database when the selected service provider creates an initial listing.

Claim 64 (previously amended): The method of claim 63, wherein the option defaults to allow access to the database.

Claim 65 (previously amended): The method of claim 57, wherein the selected service provider is notified of a missed connection with the user.

Claim 66 (previously amended): The method of claim 65, wherein the notice comes in a form of an e-mail.

Claims 67 - 68 (cancelled)

Claim 69 (previously amended): The method of claim 57, wherein the user can determine the predetermined range.

Claim 70 (previously amended): The method of claim 57, wherein a system administrator can determine the predetermined range.

Claim 71 (cancelled)

Claim 72 (previously amended): The method of claim 57, wherein a system administrator can establish the criteria by which a match is determined.

Claim 73 (previously amended): The method of claim 57, wherein the user can establish the criteria by which a match is determined.

Claims 74 - 76 (cancelled)

Claim 77 (currently amended): A machine-readable storage medium tangibly embodying a sequence of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method comprising:

sending a user a list of service providers via an Internet connection, indicating a real-time availability and a rate of each service provided on the list;

receiving from the user a selection of a service provider;

attempting to establish real-time communications between the user and the selected service provider; and

offering the user an option to connect to an alternate service provider elected in advance by the selected service provider, including searching a database of alternate service providers, in response to a failed attempt to connect the selected service provider and the user, for an alternate service provider based on a pre-established set of criteria comprising one or more of: a rate

within a predetermined range of a rate of the selected service provider, subject matter, and a reliability factor indicating a ratio of successful attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users to total attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users.

Claims 78 - 79 (cancelled)

Claim 80 (previously amended): The machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein the communication established between the selected service provider and the user is a telephone connection.

Claim 81 (previously amended): The machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein the communication established between the selected service provider and the user is an Internet connection.

Claim 82 (cancelled)

Claim 83 (previously amended): The machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein the option to connect to the alternate service provider is sent after the communications ends between the user and the selected service provider.

Claim 84 (previously amended): The machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein the selected service provider is an information provider.

Claim 85 (previously amended): The machine-readable storage medium of claim 84, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a recorded transmission.

Claim 86 (previously amended): The machine-readable storage medium of claim 84, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a communication with a live person.

Claims 87 - 88 (cancelled)

Claim 89 (previously amended): The machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein the user can determine the range.

Claim 90 (previously amended): The machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein a system administrator can determine the range.

Claims 91 - 92 (cancelled)

Claim 93 (previously amended): The machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein a system administrator establish the criteria by which a match is determined.

Claim 94 (previously amended): The machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein the user can establish the criteria by which a match is determined.

Claims 95 - 96 (cancelled)

Claim 97 (currently amended):   A system for establishing a real-time communication connection between two parties, the system comprising:

a communications interface; and

a controller computer linked with the communications interface, the controller computer having:

a first logic unit to provide a list of service providers via an Internet connection, the list to indicate a real-time availability and a rate of each of the service providers;

a second logic unit to receive from a user a selection of a service provider from the list of service providers;

a third logic unit to attempt to establish a real-time communications connection to the selected service provider; and

a fourth logic unit to search a database of alternate service providers, in response to a failed attempt to connect the selected service provider and the user, for an alternate service provider based on a pre-established set of criteria and to offer the user an option of connecting with the alternate service provider, wherein the set of criteria comprises one or more of: a rate within a predetermined range of a rate of the selected service provider, ~~subject matter,~~ and a reliability factor indicating a ratio of successful attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users to total attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users,

the fourth logic unit to reconnect the selected service provider to the user when the selected service provider signals availability.

Claim 98 (cancelled)

Claim 99 (previously amended): The system of claim 97, wherein the user can specify a method by which the selected service provider is reconnected with the user.

Claim 100 (previously amended): The system of claim 97, wherein the user can set a time limit on when to reconnect to the selected service provider.

Claim 101 (previously added): The system of claim 1, wherein the system is remote to the user.

Claim 102 (previously added): The system of claim 101, wherein the database is searched for the alternative service provider based at least on reliability factor indicating a ratio of successful attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users to total attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users.

Claim 103 (previously added): The system of claim 102, wherein the database is searched for the alternative service provider based at least on one or more of: rate within a predetermined range of a rate of the selected service provider, and subject matter.